



EAST HAVEN DEPARTMENT OF POLICE SERVICES

471 NORTH HIGH STREET • EAST HAVEN, CONNECTICUT 06512

Joseph Maturo, Jr.
Mayor

Brent B. Larrabee
Chief of Police

**Testimony of Lt. David Emerman, Records Division Head
Town of East Haven – Police Department
Judiciary Committee
March 14, 2016**

In Support of:

SB443

**AN ACT CONCERNING NOTIFICATION TO VICTIM SUPPORT GROUPS OF
THE NAMES OF VICTIMS OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE**

Good Afternoon Honorable Senators, Representatives, and members of the Judiciary Committee:

I am Lieutenant David Emerman and I am the head of the records division with the Police Department of the Town of East Haven. A few months ago, our department received a request from a domestic violence support group for information about a domestic violence victim in East Haven. However, in evaluating the appropriateness of disclosure, we reviewed C.G.S. Sec. 54-86e, which makes confidential the name and address of a victim of domestic violence, family violence, and a host of other domestic violence-related crimes. As a result, we opted not to disclose the information requested.

Subsequently, in discussions about the records request with East Haven's Town Attorney, we weighed the appropriateness of requesting a legislative supplement or amendment to C.G.S. 54-86e which would carve out an exception favoring disclosure to licensed domestic violence support groups. We made an inquiry about the possibility of such an amendment to Senator Len Fasano, and that inquiry is what has brought us here today.

The natural implication of C.G.S. 54-86e is that victims' advocacy groups have been substantially hindered in contacting victims of domestic violence. Under the current statute, these groups are unable to get information regarding victims because disclosure of victim contact information is specifically prohibited. While I understand that some groups are concerned about disclosure of sensitive information about victims and the need for privacy, victims' advocacy groups are trusted "safe havens" for such information, use the information only for their limited purposes, and do not share the information with anyone else.

Additionally, while some opposition groups are concerned about this bill's impact with respect to sexual violence victims, this bill applies to "domestic" violence victims – which constitute a much broader group of people.

Under the newly proposed bill, if a victim chooses not to utilize a group's services after being contacting, this would be the end of the contact. The public otherwise is unable to receive or obtain victim contact information.



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It is already standard practice for officers in the field to provide contact information for victims' services to domestic violence victims. These phone numbers frequently provide referrals to local advocacy groups. However, this creates an extra step, making the process even longer for victims to get the assistance they need. While we believe victims should be empowered to make their own decisions, these victims are already marginalized and afraid. Some simply cannot muster the courage to take the first step to obtain help.

One suggestion that we offer is that any proposed amendment or supplement to the present statutory framework limit disclosure of domestic violence victims' contact information to advocacy groups that are actually licensed with the State of Connecticut. This limitation measure will help ensure that only reputable agencies will be entitled to receive such information and that the privacy of this information is respected and preserved.

We appreciate the opportunity to speak to you today and ask that you support S.B. 443.

Very truly yours,

Lt. David Emerman,
East Haven Police Department

in support of the same:
Joseph H. Zullo,
Town Attorney – Town of East Haven